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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000266

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#) [KE](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: ARS PATRIOTIC WING DOWN TO ONE MEMBER IN ERITREA

REF: A. ASMARA 167
[1](#)B. ASMARA 127

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: PolOff met with Mahad Yusuf, the self-proclaimed Inspector General of the ARS Patriotic Wing in Asmara. Mahad admitted that he was the last member of the wing in Asmara and that he would soon be leaving to seek the support of Somali diaspora business leaders in Dubai and Canada. Mahad briefly mentioned the presence of Hizbul Islam representatives in-country and implied that Eritrean government (GSE) resources provided to the moderate Patriotic Wing have been almost wholly redirected to Hizbul Islam. While disappointed at the lack of U.S. support for the dwindling Patriotic Wing, Mahad vowed that the group's agenda would be set in the next few months and to have stronger support from Somalia's resident population. End Summary.

AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

[1](#)2. (C) The ARS Patriotic Wing in Asmara comprises a mix of academics, ambassadors, and community activists from the Somali diaspora. The group, in its current incarnation, is a split from the original Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia and is a further split from the group that eventually formed Hizbul Islam. What is left is a dozen (or less) diasporan Somalis dedicated to a peaceful solution to Somali's civil strife, but with no on-the-ground support and little organizational capacity. Mahad Yusuf told PolOff that he is the last remaining Patriotic Wing member in Eritrea. Other members have already left the country, presumably to recruit more diaspora members. Dr. Zakaria Abdi Haji (a British national) and Hussein Aidede are in London and Ambassador Hashi is in Dubai. Mahad mentioned only Aidede as being slated to return within the next few months. Mahad also stated that he is preparing to travel to Dubai and to his home country of Canada to also recruit diaspora members. Specifically, Mahad hopes to convince Somali business communities in Dubai of the legitimacy and merits of the Patriotic Wing. Mahad also hoped to return to Eritrea in the next two or three months.

ERITREA SUPPORT FOR HIZBUL ISLAM

[1](#)3. (C) Mahad chose his words carefully when asked about GSE support for the Patriotic Wing. He admitted that no support exists beyond being able to stay in the country and meet

openly with diplomats. At the same time, he mentioned that most of the GSE backing seems to be for Hizbul Islam and the Islamist agenda. Initially he stated that there is still a sizeable Hizbul Islam presence in Eritrea; he later backtracked to say that there is only one liaison in country (General Jama Mohamed Ghalib "Yare"). Mahad also stated "now is not the right time" for the Patriotic Wing to make public statements "given the current situation," also in reference to GSE support for Hizbul Islam.

STILL TRYING TO MAKE A NAME

¶4. (C) Mahad told PolOff he was disappointed that the United States had not picked up the Patriotic Wing as a key element to the Somali peace process. PolOff pointed out to Mahad that the Patriotic Wing has not produced any press releases, conducted interviews, written position papers, or produced any other documents since its formation (Ref A and B). Mahad admitted that the Patriotic Wing is still undergoing a restructuring phase that involves heavy recruiting of additional diaspora affiliates. He explained the long-term plan is to eventually transport the members to Somalia, leaving a liaison officer in Asmara.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The Patriotic Wing's departure from Eritrea is a tangible signal that the GSE has abandoned moderate Somali voices in favor of Hizbul Islam's hard-line agenda. Although the GSE is not (presumably) forcing the Patriotic Wing to leave the country, the dwindling support for the faction demonstrates the GSE would rather continue its

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coordination with Hizbul Islam and possibly other Islamist forces.
MCMULLEN